

## **United States Embassy, Malaysia**

### **Security Message for U.S. Citizens: *U.S. Embassy Encourages Increased Vigilance for International Schools.***

October 30, 2014

A recent anonymous posting on a Jihadist website encouraged attacks against American and other international schools in 16 Muslim countries, including Western teachers employed at these schools. That message referenced schools in the localities of Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) and Maadi (Egypt) as examples, and these two cities as locations with high concentrations of potential targets. The U.S. Embassy is unaware of any specific, credible threat against any American school or individual in Malaysia. Nonetheless, the Embassy is working with local schools identified with the United States to review their security posture. U.S. citizens residing in or visiting Malaysia should remain vigilant regarding their personal security and alert to local security developments.

It is always advisable to keep your security and situational awareness levels high. Please follow these good personal security practices:

Avoid crowds or large gatherings when traveling in public;

Know where you are going and have a plan of what to do in the event you encounter demonstrations or violence;

Identify safe areas (for example police stations, hospitals, government buildings) in your area and how to get to them quickly;

Tell co-workers or neighbors where you're going and when you intend to return;

Minimize your profile while in public;

Always carry a cell phone and make sure you have emergency numbers pre-programmed into your phone such as the Embassy's emergency number: 03 2168 5000. Emergency numbers to keep handy are; Police (999), Fire (994), and for mobile phones dialers (112);

Be prepared to postpone or cancel activities for personal safety concerns;

Report concerns you may have to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

**Threats to Safety and Security:** The Department of State remains concerned about the possibility of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens in Southeast Asia. Extremist groups in the region have demonstrated the capability to carry out attacks in locations where Westerners congregate, and these groups do not distinguish between civilian and official targets. The U.S. government has designated two such groups, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. JI is linked to al-Qaeda and other regional terrorist groups and has cells operating throughout the region. Since April 2014, Malaysian authorities have arrested 37 supporters of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group, including many individuals who planned to fight in Syria and Iraq.

U.S. citizens should consider the risks associated with travel to coastal eastern Sabah (Eastern Malaysia) because of the threat of kidnappings-for-ransom and violence from both terrorist and criminal groups. U.S. government employees are prohibited from travelling to most of this area without prior permission from the Embassy security office and Ambassador. The requirement for U.S. government employees to receive permission before traveling to these areas indicates a strong concern over safety, given recent kidnappings of foreign tourists in the region. Accordingly, U.S. citizens are advised against travel to coastal resorts and outlying islands in Eastern Sabah from Kudat to Tawau as well as resorts along the Kinabatangan River. U.S. citizens are also advised against overnight stays in Lahad Datu. Road travel to the Tabin Wildlife Reserve and Danum Valley should be arranged through reputable travel companies and take place during daylight hours.

The Malaysian government has designated the entire eastern portion of Sabah (extending from the town of Kudat in the north to Tawau district near the border of Indonesia) as the Eastern Sabah Security Zone, and established the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) to coordinate security forces' activity. There is a significant police and army presence in the area, and road checkpoints have increased. The Malaysian government has also enhanced efforts to patrol its maritime border with the Philippines, yet the area's size and remoteness continue to make the region vulnerable to future security incidents.

Malaysian law enforcement officials have enacted land and water-based curfews in the coastal areas of Eastern Sabah. Curfew schedules and the affected areas are subject to frequent change; upon arrival to the Eastern Sabah region, travelers should check local media or ask local police for the most recent curfew information.

Recent incidents: In July 2014, at a diving resort on Mabul Island, armed men killed a Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) officer and kidnapped another officer. In June 2014, a Philippine and a Malaysian national were kidnapped from a fish farm in Kunak, 37 miles from Lahad Datu. In April 2014, a foreign tourist and a hotel employee were kidnapped by armed men from a water village-style resort a short distance off the coast near Semporna. In November 2013, a foreign tourist was killed and his spouse was abducted from a resort on Pom Pom Island. In August 2013, Malaysian officials

reported an aborted attempt by an armed Filipino group to kidnap foreign tourists from the resort island of Mabul. In addition to incursions on coastal or island resort islands themselves, criminal or terrorist groups may attempt to intercept boats ferrying tourists from the mainland to resort islands. In February 2013, armed intruders from the Sulu archipelago, who entered the area by sea from the southern Philippines, were involved in a violent confrontation with Malaysian security forces in Lahad Datu district and in the Seminul water village, located in Semporna.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Malaysia enroll in the [Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the [State Department's website](#), where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the [Country Specific Information for Malaysia](#). For additional information, refer to the ["Traveler's Checklist"](#) on the State Department's website.

Contact the embassy or consulate for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to have travel information at your fingertips.

The U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur is located at 376 Jalan Tun Razak 50400, Kuala Lumpur and is open 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. If you are a U.S. citizen and have any questions or concerns, please call the U.S. Embassy at (03) 2168-5000 or visit the U.S. Citizens Service website at <http://malaysia.usembassy.gov/>. We will post the most updated information on the website.